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The importance of the Kāśikā¹

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The importance of the Kāśikā for Indological research is not in doubt. It is the oldest surviving commentary on the whole of Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī. It is our earliest testimony for all those sūtras of Pāṇini's text that are not cited, used or referred to in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. It is also the earliest text in the Pāṇinian tradition that contains a full Gaṇapāṭha, i.e., a complete collection of the lists (*gaṇa*) of words that accompany many sūtras. Being the earliest text of its kind that has survived, the Kāśikā is an indispensable tool for all historical research into the early history of indigenous Sanskrit grammar, Pāṇinian and non-Pāṇinian.

The Kāśikā is also a text that is surrounded by mysteries. Is it called Kāśikā because it was composed in Kāśī — i.e. Benares, or Vārāṇasī — as it is sometimes maintained? Or is this name a simple derivative from the root *kāś-*, like [130] *prakāśikā*, in which case it merely means “[commentary] that illumines, that explains”? And what can be believed of the story of the double authorship of the text, by Jayāditya and Vāmana? Attempts to apportion different parts of the text to different authors have so far failed, or have led to mutually contradictory proposals.²

In this article I wish to move chronologically backward — from the present to the past — and reflect upon the question whether and to what extent the surviving manuscripts of the Kāśikā can throw light on the early and earliest history of Pāṇinian grammar. I will proceed in four steps: 1. A critical edition of the Kāśikā; 2. The original text of the Kāśikā; 3. The date of the Kāśikā and its significance; 4. The value of the Kāśikā for the study of the early Pāṇinian tradition.

¹ I thank all of those who, over the years, have participated in the so far failed attempt to reconstrue the archetype of the surviving manuscripts of the Kāśikā. They are, in alphabetical order: François Bavaud, Saroja Bhate, Sushmita Dash, Prajna Dharmadhikari, Yashodhara Kar, Ambarish Kaushal, Malhar and Pooja Kulkarni, Bhagyalata Pataskar, Neelima Patvardhan, and Yves Ramseier. Financial support has been gratefully received from the Universities of Pune and Lausanne, and from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

² Kulkarni, 2002; Bronkhorst, 1983: App. I; 1990.

§1. A critical edition of the Kāśikā

How far can the surviving manuscripts of the Kāśikā take us back in time? Since they contain all of them versions of one and the same text (or part of it), they must all of them in principle be direct or (more likely) indirect copies of one single archetype. If each of our manuscripts were a direct copy of one and only one earlier manuscript, all of them would fit in a simple stemma which connects each subsequent manuscript with just one earlier one. Each earlier manuscript, on the other hand, might then be connected with an indeterminate number of later ones: the number of “direct descendants” of a manuscript may vary without upper limit, its minimum being zero. An example of such a simple stemmatic relationship is found in the introduction to Wilhelm Rau’s critical edition of the Vākyapadīya (fig. 1).

Finding a stemmatic relationship between manuscripts similar to the one presented by Rau for the Vākyapadīya is a dream for editors which rarely comes true. The sad truth is that manuscripts of a widely used text have a tendency to contaminate each other. Contamination can take different forms. The simplest case may well be when a copyist copies different parts of the text from different manuscripts. Having, say, two incomplete manuscripts at his disposal, he may, for example, copy the first half of the text from one manuscript, the second half from another. This situation, once recognized, is relatively easy to deal with: one divides the one new and complete [131] manuscript into two incomplete ones, each of which has a different position in the stemma. (This procedure must then of course be repeated for all copies of this manuscript.)

Much more complex is the situation in which a copyist uses various manuscripts when making one new one. He may choose what he considers the best reading from a choice of manuscripts: here from manuscript 1, there from manuscript 2, somewhere else from manuscript 3. A variant of this situation is the one in which the user of a manuscript looks at other manuscripts and, influenced by those other manuscripts, adds “corrections” to the original one; the person who copies this manuscript may then incorporate these “corrections” into the text. Either way, the resulting manuscript will have no place in a stemma of the kind made by W. Rau for the Vākyapadīya. The stemma may then have to be modified, so as to reveal transversal connections (i.e., contaminations).

Contamination is not the only obstacle standing in the way of finding a stemmatic relationship between manuscripts, but it is an important one. If there has been too much contamination in the manuscript history of a text, it is no longer possible to reconstrue the stemma. It may be hard to specify theoretically how much contamination is “too much”, in practice it is usually clear when the attempts to

construe a stemma fail. My own attempts to reconstrue the stemma of the Kāśikā, based on samples of texts and a choice of manuscripts, have not been successful. The application of sophisticated cladistic computer programmes and the analysis of some of the materials with the help of a specialist in informatics (François Bavaud) have not led to a break-through. It has rather led me to think that the reconstruction of the stemma that depicts the historical interrelationship between the manuscripts of the Kāśikā may not be possible, not because it does not exist (in some appropriate sense of the word “exist”), but because the material is too chaotic, mainly no doubt as a result of a vast amount of contamination that has taken place over the years. It goes without saying that others may succeed where I failed. I do hope that the French group that is now working on a critical edition of the Kāśikā will do so and be able to produce a stemma. Until and unless it has succeeded in doing so, I will start from the hypothesis that the surviving manuscripts of the Kāśikā cannot be ordered in that manner.

Even if no stemma can be established, this does not mean that there is no common archetype from which all of the surviving manuscripts have descended. There must [132] be such an archetype. It may be the autograph composed by “Jayāditya and Vāmana”, but not necessarily so; we will return to this question in §2. The question to be addressed here is whether it is possible without a stemma to reconstrue the archetype of all the surviving manuscripts. I think the answer must be negative: without a stemma the surviving manuscripts do not normally provide us with sufficient evidence to reconstrue (even approximately) the underlying archetype. There may be independent evidence, different from these manuscripts, that allows us to partially reconstrue the archetype or, more generally, an earlier version of the text. Quotations in other works may constitute such evidence.³ Intelligent use of all the available evidence may overcome some of the difficulties resulting from manuscripts for which no stemma can be reconstrued. It may lead to a “critical edition” of sorts, conceivably the best edition one can get. It should not however be forgotten that such an edition provides, at best, likely guesses as to the reading of the archetype (or of the autograph, see below).

§2. The original text of the Kāśikā

The archetype underlying all of the surviving manuscripts of a text is not always identical with its autograph, even in the case of texts where we can be sure that there once was an autograph. The archetype may indeed be considerably younger than the autograph. This is illustrated by the textual history of another important grammatical

³ See in this connection Kulkarni, 2002a.

text, the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali. This text was composed soon after the middle of the second century BCE. The archetype underlying the manuscripts used for Kielhorn's and presumably all other editions dates from around 1000 CE. The main reasons for thinking so are as follows.

The Mahābhāṣya often cites Vedic passages. Earlier researchers — first V. P. Limaye (1974), then in more detail Wilhelm Rau (1985) — noticed that a number of these quotations appear in the same corrupted form in all of the manuscripts. It follows that these manuscripts are all of them direct or indirect copies of a common archetype that already had these errors. An analysis of these corruptions convinced Michael Witzel (1986) that a number of the shared mistakes are typical for Northern post Gupta scripts, and that some of them [133] are only possible after the development of early Nāgarī. Witzel concluded from this that the archetype of the surviving manuscripts of the Mahābhāṣya belongs to a date around the year 1000 CE. Its region is harder to pin down on the basis of peculiarities of script, beyond assigning it vaguely to the north or northwest of the subcontinent.

Here, however, other factors have to be taken into account.⁴ By far the most popular commentator of the Mahābhāṣya is Kaiyaṭa. Kaiyaṭa lived in the eleventh century, probably in Kashmir. His subsequent popularity is illustrated by the large number of subcommentaries on his work that have survived.

Kaiyaṭa admits his indebtedness to the earlier commentary by Bhartṛhari. Bhartṛhari's commentary has only survived in part (and in a very corrupt form). A comparison between the two commentaries shows that Kaiyaṭa does indeed follow Bhartṛhari closely, often line by line. Equally interesting for us is that Kaiyaṭa appears to have used only one manuscript of the Mahābhāṣya. Several indications support this. The most interesting among these is the fact that (to the extent this can be verified, given that Bhartṛhari's commentary has only survived in part, and badly) Kaiyaṭa mentions variant readings exclusively there where Bhartṛhari, too, does so. That is to say, Kaiyaṭa only knows the variant readings noticed by Bhartṛhari. This indicates that he did not himself systematically compare variant readings, presumably because he had only one manuscript at his disposal.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Kaiyaṭa's great popularity is responsible for the fact that just one manuscript — *his* manuscript — managed to displace all others, so much so that today, one thousand years later, all surviving manuscripts appear to be copies of the one used by him. This illustrates that even a stemmatic edition of a text may not lead us further back than an archetype which may be very much more recent than its autograph.

This does not, of course, imply that one can never look back beyond the

⁴ See Bronkhorst, 1987.

reconstructed archetype. The Mahābhāṣya illustrates the opposite. We have some independent evidence regarding the earlier shape of this text, most notably in the form of Bhartṛhari's commentary, which was composed at least half a millennium before Kaiyaṭa. It remains important to keep in mind that manuscripts of a text, even if they permit us to reconstrue their archetype, do not necessarily provide us detailed information about the original form of that text.

To my knowledge, no one has yet suggested that the manuscripts of the Kāśikā have gone through a similar bottleneck. The Kāśikā, too, cites Vedic passages, often the same as those cited in the Mahābhāṣya. A number of these citations, but not all, are corrupted in the editions of the Kāśikā in the same way as in the Mahābhāṣya. The authoritative position of the Mahābhāṣya in the Pāṇinian tradition may be responsible for this: its author Patañjali has been considered the highest authority in Pāṇinian grammar — even higher than Pāṇini himself — at least since Kaiyaṭa. Copyists of the Kāśikā may therefore have been tempted to copy the (incorrect) readings they found in that text. Future work on the critical edition of the Kāśikā will reveal whether all of the surviving manuscripts contain the incorrect readings presumably taken over from the Mahābhāṣya. If so, one may have to conclude that all of the surviving manuscripts of the Kāśikā are descendants from an archetype that is more recent than Kaiyaṭa. It is useless to speculate about this issue at this moment, all the more so since we may hope that the required evidence will soon be available to all.

§3. The date of the Kāśikā and its significance

The Kāśikā, a commentary, is much more recent than the Aṣṭādhyāyī, the text on which it comments. It is usually dated in the seventh century CE, some thousand years later than the Aṣṭādhyāyī. How is this long separation in time between the two texts to be explained? Were there no full commentaries on Pāṇini's grammar before the Kāśikā? There can be no doubt that there were. Many names of early grammarians have been preserved; Mīmāṃsaka (1973: I: 439 ff.) provides a list in which we find, among others: Kuṇi, Śvabhūti, Vyāḍi, Māthura, Vararuci, Devanandin, Culli Bhaṭṭi, Nirlūra, Cūrṇi. Why have their works not been preserved? These questions have a direct bearing on the weight we can give to the evidence provided by the Kāśikā for questions relating to the early history of Pāṇini's grammar. The Kāśikā contains our earliest evidence for the full text of Pāṇini's grammar, but it is evidence for the shape which that grammar had a thousand years after its composition. The Gaṇapāṭha as we find it in the Kāśikā, too, is the one that existed a thousand years after Pāṇini. What is this evidence worth for the study of the early shape and history of that grammar and its appendixes [135] — even if we assume, hypothetically, that we can recuperate the original shape of the Kāśikā?

We know, then, that there were commentaries on the Aṣṭādhyāyī before the Kāśikā which have not survived. Why have they not survived? One might think that this is a pointless question. Many, perhaps most, early text in Sanskrit have not survived. The question, one might argue, is not why so many texts have disappeared, but rather why some have survived. After all, texts that are no longer copied will not survive.

In spite of this, I am of the opinion that the question why certain texts have disappeared can sometimes be fruitful. There are some cases in which we know, or very probably know, why texts have disappeared. I will discuss two such cases, both from Brahmanical philosophical schools, one the Vaiśeṣika, the other the Sāṃkhya school of thought.

The most important surviving early source of Vaiśeṣika (apart from the short Vaiśeṣika Sūtra) is Praśasta's Padārthadharmaśāstra (better known as Praśastapādabhāṣya). However, there were earlier texts. Texts belonging to other traditions refer to two of them in particular: a commentary on the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra called Kaṇḍī by a certain Rāvaṇa, and a commentary on the Kaṇḍī by Praśasta, presumably the same who also wrote the Padārthadharmaśāstra. Both these texts are lost, apart from the fragments preserved in the works of authors belonging to different traditions. These fragments show that these texts, and the Kaṇḍī in particular, represented views which were no longer acceptable to more recent Vaiśeṣikas. In other words, the Vaiśeṣika philosophy developed beyond the stage that found expression in those earlier works, and as a result those earlier works were no longer copied and got lost. One of the issues that opposed Rāvaṇa's Kaṇḍī to the form of Vaiśeṣika that has henceforth become "classical" was the denial of a creator god. Śaṅkara still debates with Vaiśeṣikas who are atheists in this sense, but at least from Praśasta onward a creator god is part and parcel of the Vaiśeṣika vision of the world. The Yuktidīpikā, a Sāṃkhya text, claims that a Pāśupata introduced the notion of a creator god into Vaiśeṣika. Śaṅkara apparently still used the Kaṇḍī at a time when most Vaiśeṣikas had passed on to a different point of view. The Kaṇḍī held more points of view which came to be abandoned in subsequent forms of Vaiśeṣika. It is not necessary to deal with these here, since I have discussed them elsewhere.⁵

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The situation in the Sāṃkhya philosophy is similar. *Our* most important old source is the Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, but the text with which several thinkers of other traditions are debating appears to be the Śaṣṭitantra of Vārṣaganya, now lost. Once again, it turns out that the Śaṣṭitantra gave expression to points of view which were no longer orthodox in "classical" Sāṃkhya. Prominent among these is the idea

⁵ Bronkhorst, 1993; 1996; 1999: ch. II.9; 1999a; 2000: ch. 7; 2004.

that substances are nothing but collections of qualities. This position was subsequently given up, and the Śaṣṭitantra was no longer copied.⁶

It is probably significant that our information about these earlier texts and opinions of Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya comes from authors belonging to different traditions. Later Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya texts do not systematically combat the abandoned positions of their own schools. These earlier positions were silently abandoned, and the texts that gave expression to them stopped being copied. It suggests that the authors belonging to these traditions preserved their fire power for attacking others, and maintained a degree of solidarity with regard to members of their own tradition.

If we now return to the Kāśikā, we may have to consider that something similar happened within the Pāṇinian tradition. Earlier commentaries existed but were no longer copied because changes had taken place within the tradition. This earlier tradition was not explicitly attacked or criticized, but ignored and silently improved upon. The very fact that the oldest surviving full commentary on the Aṣṭādhyāyī is a thousand years younger than the text it comments upon may be an indication that important changes had taken place during that period within the tradition.

We know that this is indeed what had happened.⁷ A detailed analysis of the available evidence shows that Pāṇini's grammar was for a long time studied in a relatively free manner. Scholars tried to improve upon it in various ways, such as modifying sūtras and gaṇas. The details of their activities are not known to us, precisely because virtually none of their texts have survived. (The one exception might be the short text called Paribhāṣāvṛtti or -sūcana attributed to Vyāḍi.⁸) The Mahābhāṣya was known to these grammarians, but it was not taken to be the final authority in matters grammatical. Nor was Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī, for modifications were made to it.

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All this changed with the appearance of grammarians who assigned supreme authority to Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. Bhartṛhari may have been its first commentator, but already before him there was a movement that gave central importance to this work: Candra the author of the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa appears to belong to it. This movement was in the end completely successful. No works belonging to the Pāṇinian school survive from the period intervening between Patañjali and Bhartṛhari (except, of course, the Paribhāṣāvṛtti mentioned earlier).

§4. The value of the Kāśikā for the study of the early Pāṇinian tradition.

⁶ Frauwallner, 1958; Bronkhorst, 1994; 2007.

⁷ Bronkhorst, 1983; forthcoming.

⁸ Abhyankar, 1967: 1-38; Wujastyk, 1993.

What use is the Kāśikā for the study of the earlier Pāṇinian tradition? We now know that this text was separated from the earliest part of the tradition by developments which took liberties with the precise wording of the earliest texts. The Kāśikā still preserves the traces of that intervening period. In other words, the author(s) of the Kāśikā had no reliable access to the earliest sources, i.e., primarily Pāṇini's sūtras, the accompanying Gaṇapāṭha, and the Dhātupāṭha. The sūtras and gaṇas that are included in their commentary may not therefore be fully reliable, and indeed, research carried out by Kielhorn and others shows that in a number of cases their readings are not the original ones. These cases can be identified with the help of the Mahābhāṣya. There may be other cases that cannot be found because the Mahābhāṣya does not deal with them. This means that the Kāśikā is no fully reliable guide for the earliest history of Pāṇinian grammar. It has to be used with caution, and even a complete restauration of its original text (which, as we have seen, will never be achieved) would not change this. Having said this, it must be emphasized that the Kāśikā is one of our most important sources, not only for the earliest history of the school, but also for the intervening period referred to above. It is true that the evidence it provides has to be weighed and tested at every step and may sometimes mislead us. It remains a text whose in-depth study will remain, and will have to remain, an essential part of the study of the history of indigenous Sanskrit grammar.

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Abbreviations:

AAWL	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal, Den Haag, Dordrecht
JIP	Journal of Indian Philosophy, Dordrecht
WZKS(O)	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- (und Ost-)asiens, Wien
